

5 SPY SUSPECT NAMED BY YURCHENKO SAID TO ADMIT SELLING SECRETS TO SOVIETS
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WASHINGTON

A former National Security Agency communications specialist, originally implicated by turnabout defector Vitaly Yurchenko, has told the FBI he sold U.S. secrets to the Soviet Union and became on Monday the fourth American arrested on espionage charges in five days.

Early Monday at an Annapolis, Md., hotel, the FBI arrested Ronald William Pelton, 44, who worked from 1965 to 1979 for the super-secret NSA, which spies on foreign communications and breaks codes.

In a court affidavit, FBI agent David Faulkner said Pelton told the FBI in an interview Sunday that he met with KGB officer Anatoly Slavnov on several occasions from January 1980 through January 1983. Pelton admitted receiving cash from Slavnov several times, including a \$15,000 payoff as a result of a trip to Vienna, Austria, in January 1983, according to the affidavit.

A federal source, who requested anonymity, said Pelton had been fired by the NSA for reasons not linked to the charges against him. Several sources said Pelton was the second former U.S. intelligence official whose work for the Soviets was disclosed by Vitaly Yurchenko, the KGB general-designate who defected to the West on Aug. 1 and returned to the Soviet Union three months later.

The FBI said Pelton went to the Soviet Embassy in Washington in January 1980 to offer to spy for the Soviets in return for cash. On that occasion, the FBI said, he provided information about "a United States intelligence collection project targeted at the Soviet Union."

Pelton had serious financial troubles at about the time he allegedly decided to begin his espionage activities. He filed for bankruptcy in April 1979, the affidavit said, and left the agency in July.

The Pelton arrest came on a day replete with spy developments in the capital:

The United States concluded a spy swap with Ghana, allowing Michael A. Soussoudis, 39, a cousin of Ghana's military leader Lt. Jerry Rawlins, to return to Ghana while close to 10 Ghanaians "of interest to the United States" were allowed to fly to an unidentified African country. Soussoudis pleaded no contest to charges under the espionage act and was sentenced to 20 years in prison, but that was reduced to time served since his arrest July 10.

His former lover, Sharon M. Scranage, 29, a former clerk in the CIA's Ghana station, who pleaded guilty to revealing the identities of CIA informants to Soussoudis, was sentenced Monday to five years in prison.

Israeli officials, who demanded anonymity, said their government was investigating whether someone at their Washington embassy overstepped his authority in buying classified U.S. documents from Jonathan J. Pollard, 31, a Navy civilian counter-terrorism analyst who was charged last Thursday with selling secrets to a foreign power identified by U.S. sources as Israel.

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Federal sources in Washington have said that Pollard called the Israeli embassy here before his arrest outside its gates and said he had been discovered by the FBI and needed help. Those sources added on Monday that an Israeli official replied to Pollard, "If you can shake your surveillance, we'll see what we can do."

Pollard's wife, Ann Henderson-Pollard, 25, who was arrested Friday night, was formally charged before a magistrate with unauthorized possession of documents relating to the national defense. She was held without bail.

The FBI said that during Pollard's interrogation, before his arrest, he telephoned her and asked her to remove materials from their Washington apartment, which, by chance, is located a block from that of Pelton in northwest Washington. The FBI said she gave a neighbor a suitcase of classified documents and told the neighbor she had them in preparation for a meeting with a foreign power and they should be destroyed if anything happened to Jonathan.

Assistant Attorney General Stephen Trott said it was "just coincidence" that three spy cases had lead to arrests around the past weekend. "The three cases are not related," Trott said.

In addition to the Pelton and Pollard cases, Larry Wu-Tai Chin, 63, a former CIA intelligence analyst, was arrested Friday and charged with selling U.S. secrets to China since 1952 for more than \$152,000, including information on communist Chinese soldiers taken prisoner during the Korean War.

Chin, according to a complaint filed by the FBI, was paid by the Chinese for information he obtained over 30 years while working for the U.S. consulate in Hong Kong and the CIA's Foreign Broadcast Information Service outside Washington. He retired from the CIA in 1981 and was arrested at his Alexandria, Va., home.

At the White House, presidential spokesman Larry Speakes said, "This administration from the outset has set priority on rooting out cases of espionage over the past five years."

He said the administration was trying to improve counter-intelligence capabilities, and that, "It is our goal to have more appropriations, more people and an aggressive posture to recognize the threat to our national security posed by the activity of hostile intelligence. That is a high priority and I think you see it paying off."

In Baltimore, Fred Warren Bennett, Pelton's court-appointed attorney, said his client's FBI statement should not be characterized as a confession.

"There are a number of potential defenses," Bennett said.

Pelton, according to the FBI affidavit, said his spy trips continued through this year, including a trip to Vienna as recently as last April to meet a Soviet contact.

Pelton failed to meet that contact in Vienna and was asked to make another trip in October, the affidavit said, but it did not give any evidence he made the October trip.

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The government said Pelton admitted taking his first trip to Vienna in October 1980 and a second trip there in 1983. Each time, Pelton spent three to four days in the city and was housed at the apartment of the Soviet ambassador to Austria, located within the Soviet embassy compound, the FBI said.

The government said both times, Pelton spent about eight hours a day in debriefing sessions with Slavnov, providing written answers to written questions.

During those sessions, the affidavit said, "He was questioned about practically every area of sensitive information to which he had access through his employment at NSA."

When employed by the NSA, Pelton possessed top secret clearance with special access to signals intelligence. NSA records indicate that Pelton in 1978 wrote a classified document concerning technical information about the Soviet Union. The FBI did not describe that document, but it said the NSA confirmed the document related to the U.S. defense.

Pelton told the FBI that his Soviet contact was interested in all the programs outlined in his 1978 document.

A federal magistrate in Baltimore ordered Pelton held until a detention hearing Wednesday, when bail would be set. Pelton did not enter a plea to the charges at Monday's hearing.

The NSA had no comment on Pelton's arrest or on why he had been fired.

The other U.S. intelligence agent implicated by Yurchenko was Edward L. Howard, 34, a former CIA covert officer, who fled to Finland in September after he was interviewed by the FBI about the allegations against him.